C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ATHENS 000367

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/06/2018
TAGS: PREL PGOV KV YI CY GR
SUBJECT: GREECE/CYPRUS: CHRISTOFIAS' FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT
- DESIRE TO "MOVE QUICKLY"

Classified By: A/Political Counselor Jeff Hovenier for 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This message has been cleared with Embassy Nicosia.

SUMMARY

¶2. (C) During his March 4 - 6 visit to Athens, newly elected
Cypriot President Christofias emphasized his interest in
rejuvenating UN-led efforts to achieve a settlement. In
public, he reiterated that the Annan Plan is dead, and
cautioned any attempt to resurrect it would be akin to waking
"a vampire." In private, he told interlocutors that he
wishes to move quickly, building on the July 8 Agreement, but
did not exclude working from "elements" of the Annan Plan.
Greek interlocutors assured Christofias of their support for
his efforts, although the visit was to Athens, March 4 - 6.
 He met with President Papoulias, PM Karamanlis, FM
Bakoyannis, Parliamentary President Sioufas. and leaders of
Greece's opposition parties.

-- ---
Public Line -- Settlement Wanted/Annan Plan Dead
-- ---

¶4. (U) Christofias' public line was fairly firm, expressing
his desire to resume negotiations under UN auspices, starting
from the July 8 (2006) Agreement. He termed Turkey "an
occupation force," adding that any settlement must "come from
the Cypriots, provide for the withdrawal of the Turkish
occupation troops, the termination of illegal settlements by
Turkish settlers, the recognition of the right of refugees to
return to their property, and . . . we must agree on a
bi-zonal bi-communal federation." He said the Annan Plan
"does not exist any more," adding that any attempt to
resurrect it would be "akin to a vampire to us."

Private Line -- More Nuanced

¶5. (C) We followed up separately with Marina Skordeli, one
of PM Karamanlis' diplomatic advisors, and with MFA Cyprus
Department Head Dimitrios Yannakakis and Deputy head Andreas
Papadakis. Our GOG interlocutors shared the following points:

-- Ready to Move: Christofias told his Greek interlocutors
that he wants to move quickly on the Cyprus problem. He will
meet Talat the third week of March, and is working actively
on a gesture to demonstrate a new momentum, such as opening
the Ledra Street crossing.

-- Annan Plan/July 8 Agreement: Christofias said the
starting point for negotiations must be the July 8 Agreement,
and he has already asked Talat to detail his specific

concerns/problems with that Agreement. However, Christofias also recognized that "elements" of the Annan Plan could serve as a useful way "to get started" on some of the outstanding issues.

¶6. (C) According to our contacts, PM Karamanlis and FM Bakoyannis assured Christofias that Greece "stands by you" in this. Greece is pleased with Christofias' sense of urgency and commitment to making progress. Skordeli also emphasized, however, that Greece is not a party to the talks, adding "we will coordinate with Cyprus, and offer our services to Cyprus, but we will not have a say in the negotiations." Turkey, she emphasized, will need to take a more active role, as it has "troops occupying the island, and "has more to offer to move the process along."

Kosovo Discussion

¶7. (U) Following his meeting with PM Karamanlis, Christofias said Cyprus has not recognized Kosovo's independence because "we remain faithful to the Helsinki Declaration," which requires respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. PM Karamanlis responded that Greece "feels no pressure" on

Kosovo, noting that Greece "played a protagonist role" to help the EU reach an agreement to deploy EULEX. He added that "it is for each EU member-state to decide what it will do concerning recognition of the final status of that area." SPECKHARD